



Joint Special Committee on the First Special Session of 2020

June 23, 2020

Co-Chair Courtney, Co-Chair Kotek, Co-Vice Chair Girod, Co-Vice Chair Drazan, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO), I am writing to express our positions on some critical pieces of legislation that are under consideration for the special session. APANO works to unite Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (APIs) across Oregon for social change and racial justice through advocacy, community development, and cultural strategy. Our Asian and Pacific Islander communities, especially those who are immigrants or low income, have been deeply impacted by every aspect of the coronavirus pandemic, with Pacific Islanders experiencing some of the worst health disparities of the virus. We also wish to acknowledge the many ways that the pandemic has disproportionately impacted Black, Indigenous, and Latinx communities because of historical and ongoing systemic racism.

We urge you to take critical action to stabilize Oregonians as they weather this crisis and move toward recovery. We believe that the following items under consideration will help APIs and BIPOC communities weather this crisis.

Housing (LC 45, Sections 1-6)

Stable housing is essential to individuals' and communities' health and wellbeing. With staggering increases in unemployment, Oregonians who rent their homes are at risk of evictions and homelessness. Sections 1 through 6 in LC 45 will mitigate this impact and give people who rent their homes a better shot.

By pushing families into homelessness, we run increased public health risks as families double up. Many communities of color, including our API families, already live in larger multigenerational households. When friends or family fall on hard times, many in our communities will open their doors to help their loved ones, or both households may have to double up out of economic necessity. This not only places households at risk of lease violations, but also represents a public health threat, especially as household transmission is a significant source of Oregon's increasing COVID cases.

The extension of the eviction moratorium and repayment period is essential to housing stability. Our critical resources for housing assistance and social services are already under strain. Moreover, many immigrants and refugees face particular barriers accessing public assistance due to language barriers, lack of outreach, or ineligibility due to immigration status. Addressing the fundamental issue of income loss giving no way to make up their back rent is the most effective solution during this crisis.



It is imperative that we extend the eviction moratorium now and provide tenants with at least six months to repay unpaid rent as set forth in Sections 1- 6 of LC 45.

Race and Ethnicity Data Collection and Reporting - Support LC 45 (sections 48-50)

APANO has long prioritized the importance of disaggregated data that most accurately reflects the diverse experiences of communities of color, and the various communities that exist within broader racial categories. We know that Black, Indigenous, and people of color communities are the most impacted by the virus itself and the broader economic and social impacts. As an API-representing organization, we are particularly concerned about the disproportionately high rates of coronavirus for Pacific Islander Oregonians and recognize the underlying inequities facing other communities that are in many ways shared. Despite the public health emergency, some counties are failing to connect REALD compliant data, and counties are missing data when labs are not receiving disaggregated data from providers who have actually seen these patients and requested the tests. We need to ensure that providers are collecting this disaggregated data during patient visits and address the timing, capacity, and limited resources that create barriers to data collection. To that end, we support Sections 48 through 50 of LC 45 to begin addressing this critical issue.

We also note our support of issues strengthened protections for workers, given the high number of frontline workers among API communities (LC 68, OSHA Infectious Disease Standards). We also must continue to center equity in our education system and ask the Legislature to protect education by opposing LC 76, which would worsen the deep inequities that existed before the pandemic.

Thank you for your leadership in convening this special session and diligently moving forward policies to address the unprecedented challenges Oregon is facing--challenges which we know will disproportionately harm Black, Indigenous, and Oregonians of color. We respectfully urge you to pass legislation that will help protect and stabilize Oregon's families.

Thank you,

Jenny Lee
Advocacy Director, APANO